

The endangered state of Negidal: A field report

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Abstract

© 2018 University of Hawaii Press. Negidal is a Northern Tungusic language closely related to Evenki with two recognized dialects, Upper and Lower Negidal. This nearly extinct language used to be spoken in the Lower Amur region of the Russian Far East by people whose traditional way of life was based on fishing and hunting. While the number of remaining active speakers of Upper Negidal was more or less known, the current state of Lower Negidal was still uncertain. We here report on a trip to ascertain the state of Lower Negidal and give a precise assessment of the linguistic situation of both dialects. While the Upper dialect is still represented by seven elderly female speakers, varying in proficiency from fully fluent to barely able to produce a narrative, not a single active speaker of Lower Negidal is left. The language will therefore probably be extinct in the next decade or two.

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